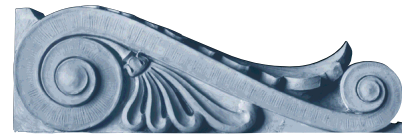


The Defense Acquisition University From Consortium to Consolidation



Kelley Berta

The Defense Acquisition University (DAU) originally operated as a consortium of several Military Service and Defense Agency schools offering acquisition-related courses as part of their curricula. During the year 2000, the University transitioned to a unified organization with a single chain of command dedicated to the professional development of the Defense Acquisition Workforce.

Why was this transition necessary? How does it change the way DAU does business? And how will it affect the members of the Acquisition Workforce? To answer these questions, this article presents a brief explanation of how and why the University was established, why changes were made, and how the results of those changes are improving our service to the Acquisition Community.

THE DEFENSE ACQUISITION WORKFORCE IMPROVEMENT ACT (DAWIA)

For over 30 years, studies and commissions recognized the need for acquisition reform in the Department of Defense

(DoD) and suggested changes in the education and training of the acquisition workforce. By the 1980s, reports of significant cost overruns breathed new life into acquisition reform efforts.

In August 1985, DoD called for a comprehensive review of the education and training functions within the Department. In addition, President Reagan established a Blue Ribbon Commission on Defense management called the Packard Commission. The findings were alarming. Both investigations concluded that DoD's acquisition workforce was "undertrained, underpaid, and inexperienced."

Fueled by the Packard Commission's recommendations and the investigations of the House Armed Services Committee, Congress adopted the Defense Acquisition Workforce Improvement Act (DAWIA) in 1990, enacting it into law as part of the FY 1991 Defense Authorization Bill. Sections 1701-1764 and Section 1205 of the Authorization Bill mandated that a Defense Acquisition University structure be established to coordinate education and training programs and support career development for the DoD acquisition workforce.

THE ESTABLISHMENT OF THE DEFENSE ACQUISITION UNIVERSITY

Several Military Service and Defense Agency schools throughout the United States already offered courses to their respective members and civilian employees pertaining to acquisition. Now, DoD Directive 5000.52-M, Career Development Program for Acquisition Personnel, identified, for the first time, specific education, training, and experience requirements for members of each acquisition career field within DoD, as identified by DAWIA. The DAU was established to accomplish this education and training. Many courses offered by the Service and Agency schools provided a good start toward meeting the required curricula established by the DoD Directive 5000.52-M. Fifteen of those schools became members of the DAU consortium.



Under this umbrella structure, Functional Boards, made up of senior-level civil servants and military members, identified the competencies required for the acquisition workforce to perform their duties. Together, the Functional Boards, DAU education specialists, and faculty members from the Service and Agency schools designed courses that met those requirements. In some cases, this meant modifying existing courses; in other cases, developing entirely new ones.

While the consortium worked closely with DAU in course development and provided the classroom instruction for DAU courses, each consortium member still reported to its respective Service or Agency. Although the DAU was responsible for coordinating acquisition education and training for the DoD, no organizational line of authority existed between the DAU Headquarters and its consortium members.

THE DAU IN REVIEW

In May 1997, six years after DAU was chartered, the Acting Under Secretary of Defense for Acquisition & Technology (USD[A&T]), Noel Longuemare, chartered a Process Action Team (PAT) to review and make recommendations regarding the management, organizational structure, and process for educating and training the acquisition workforce in DoD. Longuemare also asked the team to create a clear vision for the future of the education processes and structure that would best meet the needs of the acquisition workforce, and ultimately, the warfighters, for the year 2000 and beyond. Three months later, in August 1997, the PAT published its final report.

The PAT offered recommendations related to the operations of the University, the process for curriculum design, and the use of technology-based training. Among those recommendations, first and foremost was a restructuring of the DAU to a unified organization, with a single leader and a direct line of authority to ensure the individual consortium members accommodate changing requirements facing the acquisition workforce. The PAT Report cited that the consortium was excessively large and duplicative, with DAU funding multiple facilities, resulting in inefficient expenditure of education funds.

THE TRANSITION TO A UNIFIED ORGANIZATION

To effect the recommended changes, the President, DAU assembled an Integrated Process Team in December 1997. After months of interviews, intense study and analysis, the "Transition Team" (as they became known) recommended a comprehensive plan for transitioning the DAU from its consortium structure to a unified, world-class education and training enterprise postured to meet the needs of the future acquisition workforce.

Among its recommendations, the Transition Team proposed four main campuses with the provision for separate detachments, regional sites, and affiliated schools. All DAU civilian

and military personnel would be transferred to one DAU manning document, thus creating a single line of authority for the University. An Executive Board would be established to assist the President in the internal management of DAU, with final decision authority in the hands of the President. Also, the University would retain the Board of Visitors, individuals selected for their preeminence in academia, business, and industry. The Board of Visitors advises the President on matters such as organizational management, curricula, instructional methods, and facilities.

Other recommendations focused on faculty size, faculty qualifications, and the relationship between DAU and its DoD partners. The new structure redesigned the Functional Boards into Functional Integrated Product Teams, whose membership now includes both functional representatives and DAU personnel.

OUR GOALS FOR SERVING THE ACQUISITION WORKFORCE OF THE FUTURE

The University's primary goal has always been to provide world-class training and education to the acquisition workforce, now and in the future. Quality training is a critical element in preparing the workforce to shape smart business deals and is fundamental to creating and maintaining the professionalism Congress and the Packard Commission envisioned. Just as large, effective corporations succeed by ensuring streamlined, efficient operations, DAU realizes that efficiency and quality are key to succeeding as a premier learning institution.

With a single line of authority; a team approach to developing, delivering, and maintaining academic programs; and efficient use of resources, DAU will accomplish its goals to:

- Provide our stakeholders and customers what they need, when and where they need it.
- Operate a premier learning enterprise.
- Advance excellence in acquisition business practices.
- Employ knowledge management to enhance learning and productivity.
- Provide our stakeholders and customers with a preeminent faculty and staff.

The results of these changes will have far-reaching effects on the acquisition workforce and, ultimately, the warfighter. The new DAU will be more efficient in delivering required certification training and continuous learning opportunities, and more responsive to the immediate needs of the acquisition community. Developing online courses, implementing knowledge management, emphasizing targeted training, and building partnerships with other colleges and universities are new initiatives. The unification of DAU will enable us to better accomplish direct mission support through these initiatives.

